

Fall 2012

# Harmony or Mere Toleration? Examining Inter-religious Relations in Amertasari

Keller Hawkins  
*SIT Study Abroad*

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## Recommended Citation

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Harmony or Mere Toleration?  
Examining Inter-religious Relations in Amertasari

Keller Hawkins  
Prof. Dr. Dewa Windhu Sancaya, Udayana University  
SIT Study Abroad  
Indonesia: Arts, Religion, and Social Change  
Fall 2012

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## I. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are so many wonderful people in Amertasari that graciously let me into their lives and took care of me when I needed it. I want to thank Ibu Kadek and Pak Putu from the bottom of my heart. I consider your family now and will never forget your kindness and generosity. I also want to thank Pak Brohim for allowing me to take part in village life and being such a great contact person. I want to thank all my informants because without your information, this paper would not have been written. My translators, Wayan and Kadek, were a great help to me when I needed it. Thanks goes to Primahadi Wijaya (Dede) and Aries Pratiwi for helping me with translation and cultural questions when I needed it. I also want to thank Pak Windhu for agreeing to be my ISP advisor. I'm very grateful for my host family in Sukasada that allowed me to stay with them for the last part of my field work, and most especially to Bu Ari for withstanding the windy roads (twice!) to come get me when I was ill and allowing me to stay at her house to recuperate. Also thanks goes to Pak Gede for setting up my homestay in Sukasada and driving the length of Bali, south to north and back, twice for my sake.

## II. INTRODUCTION

When I was first told about a small village in North Bali where Hindus and Muslims live in harmony with one another, I was immediately intrigued. A month and a half later, our group was driving on the windy roads that take one from the southern part of Bali through the mountains into North Bali. We arrived in the village of Pegayaman and listened to some of the more distinguished village members tell us about life in Pegayaman. Because the village is known for being an example of religious harmony between Hindus and Muslims, this was the main topic of their talk. However, a number of things seemed odd. For one, all the spokespeople that were talking to us were middle-aged Muslim men. Hindus were present at this talk, but they were sitting together, off to the side in the back. Not one Hindu was invited to speak. During their talk, many things they were describing about village life seemed to favor Muslims, such as the intermarriage laws and the fact that Pegayaman's village head has always Muslim. Needless to say, I was suspicious of this so-called "religious harmony" that they claimed to maintain.

A month later I was sitting in a car, following those same windy roads I had taken before, heading back to Pegayaman. I hoped to find out exactly how harmoniously Hindus and Muslims lived amongst each other there. If they really did live in peace and without tensions, I wanted to know how they did it. Did they have more pluralistic theological views that accommodated their neighbors from a different faith? Did they unite around a single identity? What allowed them to live side-by-side? If there were problems, I hoped to find out what they were and if they were trying to resolve them in some way.

## A. METHODOLOGY

I had learned on my previous visit that although Pegayaman as a *desa* is 90% Muslim, one of its five *banjars*, called Amertasari, is more equal in terms of religious demographics. I planned to live there for three weeks: ten days with a Hindu family and ten days with a Muslim family. However due to illness that forced me to shorten my stay, I ended up only living with a Hindu family. Even after this hurdle, I worked hard to interact with both religious groups equally, attend religious events and talk with them on a personal level.

I knew obtaining such intimate and potentially conflictual information from the Balinese, a group of people who are known for being polite to the extreme and avoiding conflict of any kind, was not going to be an easy task. I knew formal interviews would not be appropriate for most of my research because I suspected they would not provide me with accurate information. Therefore, I relied on observation and informal conversation with the people around me. This proved to be an excellent source for almost all of my information.

### III. AMERTASARI IN CONTEXT

Getting an accurate sense of Amertasari's context within Pegayaman and the Buleleng regency is important for understanding the full picture of village<sup>1</sup> life and villagers' relationships with one another. Amertasari's history, demographics, and geography are integral to the life of the *banjar* and influence much of villagers' daily life.

#### A. HISTORY

The historical origins of the people of Pegayaman is a story passed down from generation to generation, though most commoners do not know the story themselves. When I asked Pak Brohim—the *klian dinas* (head of the *desa dinas*) of the *banjar*—about the history of Amertasari, he apologetically shrugged his shoulders and told me to ask the head of the village in Pegayaman.<sup>2</sup> If one asks the village elders of Pegayaman, one might get slightly different answers from each, for different parts of the story are commonly disputed. However, a generally agreed-upon historical account is this: in the early 17th century, Buleleng's King Panji Sakti took part in a violent battle with the Mengwi kingdom in southern Bali. After suffering more loss than gain from the powerful Mengwi troops, King Panji Sakti called upon his friend, the ruler of Blambangan, East Java, to help regain power of his kingdom. With their help, Panji Sakti reclaimed control and thanked the Blambangan soldiers by giving them the land from Pegayaman to Pancasari.<sup>3</sup> The (Muslim) village elders claim that these Muslim Javanese soldiers came and settled in Pegayaman first, and Hindus arrived later when displaced farming families

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<sup>1</sup> For simplicity's sake, I will be describing Amertasari, an area politically understood as a *banjar*, as a "village" in the most conventional sense of the word throughout this paper.

<sup>2</sup> I Nengah Ibrohim (Pak Brohim), personal communication, 22 November 2012.

<sup>3</sup> Metriani, "Pegayaman Villagers Welcome Ramadhan," *Jakarta Post*, November 6, 2003, <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2003/11/06/pegayaman-villagers-welcome-ramadhan.html>.

came after a Mt. Agung explosion that destroyed their villages.<sup>4</sup> After farming in Pegayaman for a while, the Hindus supposedly saved enough money to buy their own land in the area and, with the Muslims' consent, began building their houses.<sup>5</sup>

Because all the village elders in Pegayaman are Muslim, I tried to find out the Hindu perspective on Amertasari's history. No one knew the specifics but when I asked my host father's mother how long her family had been in Amertasari, she said she did not remember a time when she did not live here (and she is almost 70 years old).<sup>6</sup> Hence there are differing accounts of when Hindus settled in Pegayaman.

## B. DEMOGRAPHICS

The *desa* of Pegayaman has about 6,000 residents and 1,600 families, 90% of them Muslim. There are five *banjars* under Pegayaman's jurisdiction, Amertasari being the most unique among them. While every other *banjar* has an overwhelming majority of Muslims, Hindus outnumber Muslims about 2-1 in Amertasari. There are approximately 200 *KK* (family heads) in all, 140 of them Hindu and 60 Muslim.<sup>7</sup>

## C. GEOGRAPHY AND CLIMATE

Geographically speaking, Pegayaman is quite large and diverse. The *desa* claims almost 16 kilometers from north to south, with Pancasari as the southern boundary and Gitgit in the north. Though the distance from *banjar* to *banjar* can be rather far, it makes political and

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<sup>4</sup> Pak Haji Wayan Hasyim, personal communication, 18 October 2012. The date of the eruption is unclear.

<sup>5</sup> Pak Haji Wayan Hasyim, personal communication, 18 October 2012.

<sup>6</sup> Ibu Ketut Sekap, personal communication, 17 November 2012.

<sup>7</sup> Pak Brohim, personal communication, 22 November 2012.

economic sense to combine each smaller village community into one politically recognized *desa*. Nestled in the hills of North Bali, the elevation among *banjars* can vary from 450 to 1,200 meters above sea level.<sup>8</sup> Amertasari is the southern-most *banjar* in Pegayaman. Because of its distance from the village head's office, people in Amertasari refer to "Pegayaman" as if it is a separate village. From its looks and lifestyle, it might as well be a separate village from Amertasari.

In the *banjar* that houses the village heads' office, there is a defined center. Activity is localized around the *pesantran* (Muslim boarding school) and within households. People are seen walking along the small streets during the day and the Islamic call to prayer is heard five times a day from the large mosque in the village—the only one in all the *desa*. Amertasari, by contrast, has no understood "center" of village life. There is one main paved street that hugs the lush green hills' curves and it is in need of serious repair. Motorbikes are the only way one can get around quickly, and even still most people prefer to walk by dirt pathways made over the years through the area's plant life. Houses are seemingly scattered randomly about the hillside and are usually at least a good minute or so walk from the next. However, the situation of compounds are not as random as originally perceived, for families of one religion tend to live near families of the same religion. For instance, one will never find a Muslim household without any other Muslim families neighboring it or nearby, or vice versa.

All villagers—no matter what religion—know exactly where all other Amertasarians<sup>9</sup> live. When asked, the location is usually described in terms of the compound's positioning on the hillside. The word *atas* (literally translated as "top") is used to describe those that live higher on

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<sup>8</sup> Desa Pegayaman informational handout

<sup>9</sup> I created this word to refer to the residents of Amertasari.

the hillside than the informant, and *bawah* (“bottom”) for those that live lower. Though the network of small paths in the dirt can confuse an outsider, every person in Amertasari—even small children—knows the way to wherever he or she might be going.

Because of its situation in the hills, the average temperature in Amertasari tends to be much cooler than the rest of Bali. At night it can even get below 50 degree Fahrenheit. While the rainy season was technically underway during my stay, the rains had not yet been consistent for most of Bali. However, while in Amertasari, there was a heavy rain almost every afternoon. Because of its climate and geography, Amertasari has no rice fields. It is too cold, and the land is too steep for rice cultivation. Instead, coffee farming is the main industry.

#### D. ATMOSPHERE

It is impossible for one to take a quick trip to the nearby *warung* to pick up some noodles for the night’s dinner. Every journey, however small, turns into a social event once one leaves the confines of his or her house. Curious families peek out from their compounds to see who the passerby is and chat about the most recent news. As an outsider, I was almost always asked to “stop by” for a moment so the mother of the house could serve me tea or sweets, the typical and expected gesture of hospitality in Amertasari. Villagers greet each other as they pass one another on their walks and inform the other of where they are headed and for what purpose. Even on a motorbike, men acknowledge each other with a friendly smile and a head nod, and frequently slow down to chat momentarily with one another on their way. In short, neighborliness is encouraged and expected. Since Amertasari has a relatively small population in such a remote area, interaction among friends and neighbors is thirsted for. This is especially true because the

Balinese tend to find a great deal of enjoyment and a portion of their identity in spending time with friends and their tight-knit community.

To the trained eye, it takes just a glance at a compound to know whether the family that lives there is Hindu or Muslim. There are two key indicators: shrines and dogs. All Balinese-Hindus have some sort of a family shrine inside their compound. In Amertasari, these shrines are not very elaborate and are commonly made with simple sticks, reflecting the influence of indigenous Balinese traditions before Hinduism came to Bali.<sup>10</sup> Hindus also believe that dogs are guardians of their compounds, especially when they are out. Every Hindu compound I came across during my time in Amertasari had at least one dog, and their family shrine was immediately visible from its entrance. Chickens are usually roaming around a Hindu compound, but they won't find themselves on a dinner plate. They are used as sacrifices for ritual offerings and fought at *tajen* for religious purposes. Hindus also sometimes have cows and pigs, but their stalls are not always kept in plain sight from the road or path.

Muslim compounds can seem quite bare and quiet compared to their Hindu neighbors', for they are lacking the numerous animals that Hindus live alongside. Muslims believe dogs to be unclean, so they do not have them as pets like the Hindus. Pork is forbidden to be consumed in Islam, so Muslims have no need to keep pigs. If they have a chicken or two, they are caged up and out of sight. Expressions of faith inside a Muslim compound are more subtle and usually required one to have to enter the home to see.

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<sup>10</sup> Ni Wayan Ariati, Ph.D, personal communication, 13 November 2012.

#### IV. INTRA-RELIGIOUS RELATIONS

During my time in Amertasari, I was lucky enough to attend numerous religious events of both Hindus and Muslims. Thus I was able to witness a great deal of intra-religious interaction. From my observations, I found that religious aspects of Amertasarians' lifestyles are deeply important to sustaining meaningful connections and a sense of camaraderie between those of the same religious group. It is important to understand the Hindu and Muslim religious activities in Amertasari for they are unique and reflect each religious community's purpose, priorities, and identity apart from one another.

##### A. HINDU RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES

All Hindus in Amertasari are a part of the *desa adat* of the *banjar*. This is a social organization that is rooted in Balinese-Hinduism, and hence, Muslims are excluded from its membership. The *desa adat* organizes the religious life of Hindus, including preparation for cremations, temple ceremonies, and maintenance of temples, and adheres to a customary law code called the *awig-awig*. There are smaller units within *desa adat* called *tempek*. These are usually geographically categorized by location within the *banjar* area. In Amertasari, there are three *tempeks*. The *tempek* for those that live higher on the hill is *Tempek Satu* (One). *Tempek Tiga* (Three) is for those that live in the lower region, and *Tempek Dua* (Two) is for those in between. Each Hindu family must have a representative of sorts, called the *KK* (*kepala keluarga*, of head of the family), that is required to attend *tempek* meetings and all other *tempek* activities. Once a man gets married, he officially becomes a member of the *desa adat* and usually becomes the *KK* for his family.

All the *KK* meet for *tempek* meetings once a month in Amertasari. A majority of the meeting is devoted to money collection from each *KK*, while the *tempek* secretary records each payment. There is an obligated payment required at each meeting from each family, usually around Rp. 5,000. If a family cannot pay this at the meeting, they are expected to pay at the next meeting, along with that month's payment. Families are also required to pay a fine if they missed a *tempek* meeting or have violated another part of the *awig-awig*. All collected money is used for temple ceremonies and other religious activities.<sup>11</sup>

Hindus in Amertasari are very loyal to their *tempek* circles. This is because its members live in close proximity to one another and see each other at regular *tempek* meetings. Perhaps the thing that keeps them the closest is farming within the *subak*. Two of the three *tempeks* in Amertasari have their own *subak* for coffee cultivation.<sup>12</sup> *Subak* are traditionally agricultural co-ops for rice fields. The group decides when to plant and harvest the rice, efficiently organizes irrigation systems and carries out the necessary Hindu rituals at the appropriate times according to the life-cycle stages the rice is in. Each *subak* usually has its own small temple or shrine.<sup>13</sup> However, since Amertasari has no rice fields, *subaks* there deal with coffee farming, and the rituals that coincide are less intricate and assimilated to be appropriate for coffee plants.

For a *subak* to be recognized by the government and receive funding, there must be at least 30 *KK* in a *tempek*. This is the reason that there are only two *subaks* in Amertasari rather than three; the third *tempek* is too small to form a *subak*. Because of its religious affiliation, Muslims are not allowed to join *subak*. However, there are all-Muslim *subaks* in Pegayaman.

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<sup>11</sup> Putu Suma Ardana (Pak Putu), personal communication, 17 November 2012.

<sup>12</sup> Pak Putu, personal communication, 20 November 2012.

<sup>13</sup> Fred B. Eiseman, Jr., *Bali: Sekala & Niskala, Volume II: Essays on Society, Tradition, and Craft* (Bali: Periplus Editions, 1990), 288.

These are found in the lower elevation *banjars* that can support rice farming. Instead of the Hindu rituals, these Muslim *subaks* do similar rituals but toward Allah rather than toward the rice gods of Hinduism.

All *desa adat* members worship at the same set of temples. Thus all Hindus in Amertasari gather at least every 15 days for *Purnama* and *Tilem*, the Full and New Moon temple ceremonies. Although the purpose of these temple ceremonies is to pray and carry out the necessary rituals to please the gods, they also quickly turn into regular social events. After a family arrives at the temple, children quickly find their friends to play games, men have a smoke with their male friends, and women sit with one another to chat and gossip. All enjoy the atmosphere and the opportunity to catch up with friends and neighbors, especially those that do not live close to one's compound.

Life-cycle rituals also provide opportunities for Hindus to spend time with one another and sustain their already deep relationships. For events such as weddings and *otonan*, a ritual that happens 210 days after a baby has been born, the offerings required for the rituals can take more than three days' time to fully prepare even with more than a dozen women helping. This preparation time is not seen as a burden but a joyful time to work alongside friends and family while laughing at all the good-natured bantering constantly being thrown about.

All these events, from *tempek* activities and *subak* farming to temple ceremonies and life cycle rituals, help to form a strong camaraderie between the Hindus in Amertasari. Their shared religious experiences and activities give them a shared sense of purpose and identity.

## B. MUSLIM RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES

While Muslims in Amertasari do not have a formal organization that binds them all together like the Hindu *desa adat*, they do meet frequently, if not more frequently than their Hindu neighbors. Muslims are supposed to pray five times a day, but these prayers are usually more individual-focused and not done in groups. However, on Fridays at noon, Muslims usually meet at the local mosque and pray together as a group. In Amertasari, the closest mosques are in Pegayaman, near the village head's office, or in the nearby village of Pancasari, and women are typically not welcome to pray there. There are also small meeting areas for Muslims called *musholas* that can be thought of as outlet mosques.

The *mushola* in Amertasari—which happens to be located next door to the house of Pak Brohim (the *klian dinas*)—is used by Muslim women for Friday prayers and something Amertasarian Muslims call *Pengajian*. Translated as “Study” or “Recitation” in English, this meeting happens every Sunday morning and most Muslims in Amertasari attend. This gathering is seen to the Muslims as their version of a *desa adat* meeting.<sup>14</sup> According to Pak Brohim, Hindus are welcome too, but no one has taken up the offer yet.<sup>15</sup>

*Pegajian* is led by the head of Pegayaman, Haji Wayan Hasyim. He is revered by all Muslims because he has completed the *hajj*, a pilgrimage to Mecca that all Muslims are required to take (if able). All attendees of the event meet in the *mushola* to wait for Haji Wayan Hasyim's arrival. After greeting him with proper respects, all listen to his words for approximately an hour and a half. He recites some of the Koran while giving his commentary on ethics and moral action. When he is finished, all migrate to Pak Brohim's house for refreshments and snacks. The

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<sup>14</sup> Pak Brohim, personal communication, 18 November 2012.

<sup>15</sup> Pak Brohim, personal communication, 5 November 2012.

men sit with one another, enjoy coffee and cigarettes, and catch up on the latest news. The women and children sit separately and eat little sweet treats such as cakes and cookies. The children eventually play little games with one another while the women talk with one another about their past weeks.

Other than the regular Sunday morning meeting, Muslims in Amertasari celebrate Islamic holidays together, such as Ramadan and the birth of the Prophet Mohommad. These holidays are focused on community and sharing meals with close friends and family. Weddings are also important times to gather in celebration, and the whole community attends. All of these events, just like the Hindu religious events, create a profound sense of community among Muslims in Amertasari. They provide opportunities to learn and grow in their faith as Muslims, as well as learn from their fellow Muslim neighbors and create a sense of shared purpose.

## V. INTER-RELIGIOUS INTERACTION

Although the relations between members of the same religion are deep and profound, the same cannot be said about inter-religious relations. Let us explore the specifics that led me to this conclusion.

### A. BROAD OBSERVATIONS

Whenever someone learned that I was in Amertasari to study inter-religious interactions, the immediate response from members of both religious groups was this: “Muslim and Hindu—we’re the same people here.” As I dug deeper into their lives, however, I realized that the accuracy of that statement faltered. Through daily conversations with my acquaintances in

Amertasari, I sensed that there was a general ignorance about and apathy toward the religious activities of the other religious group. Further, in attending some of the religious events that were supposedly open to people of the other religion, the inaccessibility of the rituals<sup>16</sup> to outsiders or people of different religious traditions was significant enough to prohibit the potentially curious and open-minded outsider from truly understanding or appreciating the ritual taking place.

One example of this that I witnessed was at Hindu wedding, both its preparation and ceremony. All the women knew exactly what to do and when to do it, without doubt. They knew how to make the most intricate and complex shapes out of banana leaves like they had been doing it for their whole lives (which is not that inaccurate). They knew what color flower each offering needed and where the rice was to be put. At some points, I tried to help but was quickly forced to become an observer once again because of the complexities of the creation of various offerings. If a Muslim showed up to help, he or she would be at a loss.

During the ceremony, there was no announcement about where to go or what to do, all just knew as if some signal was given. Although Muslims were invited, only Pak Brohim showed up and stayed for less than an hour. Furthermore, being the *klian dinas*, I assumed his presence was expected, if even just for a little while. During his visit to the wedding, he sat somewhat awkwardly with some other men, smoked a cigarette, and talked to me because we had already met. Thus the Muslim experience of such a day of joy and celebration for Hindus differs quite considerably.

Another aspect of religious life that is not understood by the other religious group is the abundance of offspring that Muslims have in Amertasari. Some Amertasarian Muslims are one of

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<sup>16</sup> Used in the most conventional sense of the word to describe religious acts of both Hindus and Muslims

eight or more children in their family. They themselves can have five or more children. Hindus are appalled by this.<sup>17</sup> Since the family planning initiative was implemented in the early 1970s, the Balinese have been encouraged to have only two children and given contraceptives by the government. Most Balinese have adhered to this recommendation. But some Amertasarian Muslims' blatant disregard for this governmental recommendation have left the Hindus feeling cheated.<sup>18</sup> However they have not tried to understand that for Muslims, family is very important. Every child is understood to be a gift from Allah and brings great pride to Muslim couple's families.

## B. MUSLIM ACCULTURATION

Referring back to my first visit to Pegayaman, it is clear that Muslims in Pegayaman highlight their acculturation of traditionally Balinese practices to curious outsiders. They have acculturated many things since they first arrived in Bali in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, but there is a limit. In article published four years ago, the head of the village then said that as long as belief was not involved, acculturation was okay because they use the [acculturated] rituals for their own purposes and beliefs.<sup>19</sup>

A prime example of Muslim acculturation of a Balinese custom is seen in almost any Muslim name in Pegayaman. One will find that they combine the traditional Balinese birth-order naming system with traditionally Muslim names, making names such as Nyoman Muhri or Nengah Ibrohim. Muslims of Pegayaman see this shared tradition as a way to become closer to

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<sup>17</sup> Ibu Kadek, personal communication, 12 November 2012.

<sup>18</sup> I Wayan Ariati, Ph.D, personal communication, 13 November 2012.

<sup>19</sup> Anton Muhajir, "Akulturasi Bali, Hindu dan Islam di Pegayaman," *Bale Bengong*, September 21, 2008, <http://www.balebengong.net/topik/budaya/2008/09/21/akulturasi-bali-hindu-dan-islam-di-pegayaman.html>.

and accepted by their Hindu Balinese neighbors in the area. However, it has indirectly produced an undesired effect: Hindus in Amertasari have stopped using “Wayan” and “Nengah” for the first- and second-born and instead use “Putu” and “Kadek” (respectively) in an effort to distinguish themselves.<sup>20</sup>

There are other things that Muslims have acculturated over the years living in Bali. Pegayaman has a singing group that sings in Arabic but wears traditional Balinese clothing when performing.<sup>21</sup> Muslims in Pegayaman have also gotten media attention from *The Bali Post* for practicing the Balinese custom called *ngejot*. Traditionally this practice involves sharing edible portions of offerings after they have been given to the gods with neighbors. Muslims have continued this custom for high holy days such as Idul Fitri, but instead of the shared goodies being from offerings, they make cakes and sweets to share with Muslim and Hindu neighbors alike.<sup>22</sup> In my observation, this *ngejot* custom was practiced, but not necessarily for the purposes of inclusion of all in religious holidays and customs. For instance, Pak Brohim was given a portion of the offerings made at the Hindu wedding, but only because he showed up. Pak Putu, my host father, was given some goodies after Sunday morning’s *pengajian* but admitted to me later that he did not understand why he got them.<sup>23</sup>

Pak Putu’s reaction to his gift from Pak Brohim is a great example of how Hindus feel about Muslim acculturation of some of Balinese practices: confusion. As a whole, I observed that while Muslims easily adopted some of these Balinese customs perhaps in order to conform more

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<sup>20</sup> Ibu Kadek, personal communication, 13 November 2012.

<sup>21</sup> Pak Haji Wayan Hasyim, personal communication, 18 October 2012.

<sup>22</sup> Adnyana Ole, “Tradisi ‘Ngejot’ Masih Terpelihara” *Bali Post*, August 30, 2011, 11.

<sup>23</sup> Pak Putu, personal communication, 18 November 2012.

in Balinese society, the Hindus did not take much notice, nor have they tried to reciprocate this acculturation.

### C. SECULAR SOCIETY

There are many factions of Amertasari village life that are secular in nature. Some of them create merely inevitable interactions without foster a sense of unity between religious groups, while others cultivate a shared identity among members of both groups and create cordial cross-religious interactions.

#### INEVITABLE INTERACTIONS

As before mentioned, Muslims in Amertasari are not allowed to be a part of the Hindu *subak*, and one of the Hindu *tempeks* was too small to have a *subak*. Perhaps in response to these two things, Amertasari has *kelompok tani*, which are farming cooperatives for coffee farming in particular. These cooperatives are completely secular, funded by the government, and membership is open for all land-owning residents.<sup>24</sup> The government provides seed and the cooperative divides it evenly. Each individual gets to keep all returns.<sup>25</sup> Like *subak*, a *kelompok tani* can only be established with a certain number of members, but since Muslims can join these groups, the membership of *kelompok tani* outnumbers the members in *subak* for Amertasari.<sup>26</sup> Even though *kelompok tani* seems to provide an opportunity for inter-religious interaction, the

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<sup>24</sup> Pak Putu, personal communication, 17 November 2012.

<sup>25</sup> Pak Putu, personal communication, 20 November 2012.

<sup>26</sup> Pak Putu, personal communication, 20 November 2012.

cooperative rarely has formal meetings. They only gather when the government distributes the seed and each farmer usually works individually.<sup>27</sup>

Another secular organization that creates potential for inter-religious interaction is *desa dinas*, the administrative side of village political life. This political organization links every *banjar* to their mother *desa*, which provides a link to the larger levels of government in Bali. Every landowner of Amertasari is a member of *desa dinas* and, just like *desa adat* described before, is known as the *KK*. The members of *desa dinas* meets once a month in a meeting house called the *kantor dinas*. At meetings there is a money collection of the monthly dues and discussion of what repairs need to be done in the village. When a repair needs to be done, such as the renovation of a road, all are required to help.<sup>28</sup> Governmental services, such as child vaccinations, are also provided through the *desa dinas* and take place at the *kantor dinas*.

The potential for inter-religious unity through *desa dinas* is lost when one considers that the head of *desa dinas*, the *klian dinas*, in a Hindu majority *banjar* is Pak Brohim, a Muslim. It makes matters worse when one learns that Hindus must have an invitation to go to Pak Brohim's house while Muslims can freely come and go.<sup>29</sup> Perhaps it is for that reason that Hindus tend to be much more allegiant to their own *desa adat* than *desa dinas*.

In terms of education, all children from Amertasari attend one of three elementary schools, two middle schools and all go to a single high school. However, after elementary school, many children are forced to stop attending because of cost. Furthermore, many Muslim families send their children to *pesentrans* (Muslim boarding schools) in Java to receive more religious

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<sup>27</sup> Pak Putu, personal communication, 20 November 2012.

<sup>28</sup> Pak Putu, personal communication, 17 November 2012.

<sup>29</sup> Ibu Kadek, personal communication, 10 November 2012.

education.<sup>30</sup> Thus opportunity to make cross-religious friendships dwindles to a few short years and will most likely not last.

Small *warungs* operated outside compounds of people of both religious groups, are a hotspot for inter-religious interaction. However since Muslims tend to live in clusters and Hindus have such a strong network of friends and family in the hills of Amertasari, each religious group tends to stick to buying from their own. Whether it is because of proximity or avoidance of inter-religious interaction, it cannot be sure.

## MEANINGFUL INTERACTIONS

Despite the failed potential of the previously mentioned inter-religious aspects of Amertasari village life, there are some other aspects that have had a positive impact on inter-religious relations. The first is something that is a part of both groups' lives on a daily basis. All people in Amertasari know how to speak Balinese and prefer to use it on a day-to-day basis. It is spoken so regularly that many of the elder residents of Amertasari have forgotten how to speak Bahasa Indonesian, for the most recent time they used it frequently was in school. The fact that both religious groups use Balinese as their preferred language among their respective religious groups and when speaking to one another provides a shared bond and creates a shared sense of Balinese identity among them. In fact, according to an article in *The Jakarta Post* about Pegayaman, a Muslim man claimed, "Most of us in the village feel that we are real Balinese because we do not speak Javanese."<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Ibu Kadek, personal communication, 12 November 2012.

<sup>31</sup> Metriani, "Pegayaman Villagers Welcome Ramadhan," *Jakarta Post*, November 6, 2003, <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2003/11/06/pegayaman-villagers-welcome-ramadhan.html>.

Other than language, there is another secular aspect of village life that members of both religious groups, specifically men in this case, share: a love and perhaps an addiction to cigarettes. In any social interaction that lasts longer than a mere five minutes, a cigarette will be lit. Every man carries around their small box of cigarettes and lighters everywhere they go. If on some rare occasion that they have forgotten them at home, men will quickly share amongst each other. This is true for both intra- and inter-religious settings and interactions. This minor aspect of shared culture actually goes a long way. It ends up creating a casual but profound unspoken bond between males of both religious groups.

As for Amertasarian women, their opportunity for cross-religious interaction is much more limited. Men do most of the errands for the family, and frankly, women (of both religious groups) are incredibly busy at home. They must do all the cooking, cleaning, and clothes washing. If a woman has children, she does a majority of the child rearing and takes care of them during the day while the father is farming. She also may help gather food for any livestock they might have.<sup>32</sup> If there was an arena for women of both religious groups to gather and simply talk to one another, I suspect they would find that their responsibilities mirror one another's and that they tolerate similar living conditions, such as cold baths and wood-burning stoves.

#### D. INTERMARRIAGE

The existence of a multi-religious society eventually begs the question of whether or not intermarriages exist between religious groups. As for Amertasari, they exist, but the outsider would never know. In all cases, the woman converts to her new husband's religion.<sup>33</sup> Rarely, if

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<sup>32</sup> Everyday my host mother, Ibu Kadek, would go out to cut large leaves off trees to feed to the family's two cows.

<sup>33</sup> Pak Nyoman Muhri, personal communication, 5 November 2012.

ever, will both persons be from Amertasari.<sup>34</sup> Most previously inter-religious couples meet each other outside the village, normally at their job.<sup>35</sup> If a Hindu woman marries a Muslim man, the couple usually decides to marry by *merangkat*,<sup>36</sup> also called *kawin lari*.<sup>37</sup> This form of marriage is a type of elopement in which the man abducts the girl, normally voluntarily, with a marriage party, especially if the woman's family does not approve of the marriage.<sup>38</sup> The woman is quickly converted to Islam by a "swift ceremony" and hopes that her family will eventually accept her marriage.<sup>39</sup> This was how Pak Brohim married his wife, Bu Siti, who used to be Hindu.<sup>40</sup> She met Pak Brohim outside of Amertasari, and at first her parents severely disapproved of her marriage. Luckily, as of now, they accept it and she maintains open communication with her Hindu family.<sup>41</sup> Muslim women do not openly talk much about their Hindu origins in Amertasari. In fact, I only learned that Pak Brohim's wife used to be Hindu from my host mother. When she informed me, she said it in a way that implied that she viewed his wife with a sense of wariness and potentially even disloyal.

If a Muslim woman marries a Hindu, there is even greater controversy. Muslims are not allowed to marry outside of Islam, a rule that is rooted in Islamic Shariah law.<sup>42</sup> Thus it is strongly looked down upon in the Muslim community. Much to their dismay, though, this type of marriage still happens within Amertasari. For the marriage to take place, the woman must

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<sup>34</sup> Ibu Kadek, personal communication, 11 November 2012. There is one recent case that a Hindu woman married a Muslim and both are from Amertasari.

<sup>35</sup> Ibu Kadek, personal communication, 11 November 2012.

<sup>36</sup> Fredrik Barth, *Balinese Worlds* (Chicago: Univ of Chicago Press, 1993), 47.

<sup>37</sup> Siti Musslima (Bu Siti), personal communication, 22 November 2012.

<sup>38</sup> Fredrik Barth, *Balinese Worlds* (Chicago: Univ of Chicago Press, 1993), 47.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Bu Siti, personal communication, 22 November 2012.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. To add to the family drama, two of Bu Siti's younger sisters married Muslims (one is Pak Brohim's younger brother) and thus converted to Islam.

<sup>42</sup> Fredrik Barth, *Balinese Worlds* (Chicago: Univ of Chicago Press, 1993), 47.

go through all of the necessary life-cycle rituals in order to be essentially reborn into a Hindu.<sup>43</sup>

As it so happens, I learned from my host mother that one of Pak Brohim's daughters married a Hindu, converted, and now lives far away and never comes home.<sup>44</sup> When I asked my host mother how Pak Brohim felt about the marriage, she said he was "*keras*" about it, a word that can be translated as "harsh", "severe", "violent", "strict", "heavy", or "stern". Further, in my interview with Pak Brohim's wife, she denied altogether that she had a Hindu daughter.<sup>45</sup> This type of marriage rarely takes place in Amertasari perhaps because of the amount of controversy that ensues after a Muslim woman marries a Hindu man.<sup>46</sup>

From both religious perspectives, intermarriages do more harm than good in terms of inter-religious relations in Amertasari. Overall, they cause more awkwardness and village drama than inter-religious harmony and understanding. It could be argued that this is caused by the custom that the woman must convert to her husband's religion. This custom makes truly inter-religious marriages impossible, an arena where inter-religious dialogue would be inevitable and safely cushioned by a couple's love and friendship with one another.

## E. THE ANOMALISTIC SUCCESS

So far, it seems that only a certain few secular activities are successful at producing cross-religious interaction and fostering a singular shared identity between the two religious

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<sup>43</sup> Ibu Kadek, personal communication, 11 November 2012.

<sup>44</sup> Ibu Kadek, personal communication, 11 November 2012.

<sup>45</sup> Bu Siti, personal communication, 22 November 2012. I asked her how many children she had and she replied, "Four." I proceed to ask if all of them were Muslim, and she simply said yes. It is important to note here that at this point in my interview with her, Pak Brohim had let himself into the room and was listening intently.

<sup>46</sup> Pak Putu, personal communication, 9 November 2012.

groups. However, there is one last activity that creates arguably the most successful arena for cultivating amicable inter-religious relations. Here is a hint: it involves lots of chickens.

### *TAJEN*

The Balinese-Hindu custom of cockfighting, commonly known as *tajen*, has a deeply religious purpose. The spilling of blood before a large temple ceremony is required to appease the demonic spirits and purify the area.<sup>47</sup> Because of its religious importance, the Balinese government allows three rounds of *tajen* for ritual purposes, and betting is not allowed. However *tajens* tend to look much different than the governmental allocations permit.

Although the traditional purpose of Balinese cockfights is religious, the main attraction of *tajen* is secular in nature: betting. Men flock to them with pockets full of money (that their wives may or may not know they have) and blood-thirsty eyes. To the outsider this may seem like a brutal and inhumane custom, but the Balinese do not see it like that. As Fred Eiseman puts it, “To them [the Balinese], the death of a chicken in the cockfight arena is in no way different from its demise under the knife in the kitchen.”<sup>48</sup> It is seen as a fun social event where men can relax without their wives, smoke cigarettes, take up a bet with their neighbors, and hopefully leave with some money.

*Tajens* in Amertasari happen every 35 days outside the *Pura Dalem*, one of the three village temples. However, the thing that makes *tajens* in Amertasari unique is that both Hindus and Muslims attend.<sup>49</sup> Islam prohibits its adherents from gambling, but that does not keep a

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<sup>47</sup> Fred B. Eiseman, Jr., *Bali: Sekala & Niskala, Volume II: Essays on Society, Tradition, and Craft* (Bali: Periplus Editions, 1990), 241.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Pak Putu, personal communication, 9 November 2012.

significant portion of Amertasarian Muslims from regularly attending the monthly *tajen*. Even the *klian dinas* goes!<sup>50</sup> Even still, the Muslims that do attend do not flaunt it, but it is understood to most villagers who ignores the prohibition and who obeys it. Because members of both religious groups attend this social event, it helps to foster cordial relations between the two groups. And these relationships do not stay in the cockfighting arena.

My host father, Pak Putu, is an avid fan of cockfighting. When I first saw him and Pak Brohim interact, I could tell that they had some kind of bond. When Pak Brohim came to my host family's house and asked if he could examine Pak Putu's rooster, I figured out where that bond had been formed. I asked my host father just to confirm it and he shyly nodded his head.<sup>51</sup> Later on during my stay in Amertasari, Pak Putu would always be the one to take me to Muslim events. It was clear that Pak Putu was closer with certain Muslim men than with others. They spoke much more casually to one another, leaned on each other like close Balinese acquaintances commonly do, and freely laughed at one another. When I asked him about if those men that I had observed him with attended *tajen*, my host father laughed heartily and wondered how I had figured it out.<sup>52</sup>

Because the impacts of the bond formed at *tajen* are so clearly manifest in every day life, it is the most successful aspect of inter-religious interaction that maintains their amiable relations. I cringe thinking about what Amertasari would look like without them. The secular aspects of Amertasari would not be able to sustain friendly enough relations between the two

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<sup>50</sup> Pak Putu, personal communication, 9 November 2012.

<sup>51</sup> Pak Putu, personal communication, 9 November 2012.

<sup>52</sup> Pak Putu, personal communication, 20 November 2012.

religious groups, especially considering the other negative emotions previously mentioned that they hold toward one another.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The question still remains: how harmoniously do the separate religious groups in Amertasari live? After doing my fieldwork, I have inferred that the two groups do in fact live peacefully but in mere toleration of each other. In short, the two groups simply coexist. While there are some secular activities that foster positive inter-religious interaction, the strictly religious activities of each group easily outnumber them. The depth of inter-religious friendships comes nowhere near the loyalty and bond that each religious group has for its own members. There is little mutual understanding of one another's religious traditions, if any at all, nor are there any real desires to learn more.

Although the state of the inter-religious relationship in Amertasari between Hindus and Muslims is defined, each religious group has a different level of dedication to the unity of the community. While Muslims as a whole tend to show themselves off as a part of the whole with seemingly pluralistic attitudes, Hindus consistently try to distinguish themselves as a separate group altogether that lives and breathes on its own. Are there fundamental religious reasons behind these attitudes? I believe so.

Islam is a religion that is globally centered. All Muslims are to pray facing Mecca, a symbolic way to unite all Islamic adherents daily wherever they may happen to live. During the lunar month of Dhu al-Hijjah, thousands of Muslims from all over the world gather for a pilgrimage in Mecca, called the *hajj*. While there are different beliefs inside Islam, unity is

formed among all Muslims because similar practice, such as the five daily prayers and the celebration of holy days. It is a religion that fully acknowledges those of other religions, engages with them, and perhaps even converts some members of those religions (for Islam is a proselytizing religion). As for Balinese Muslims, Fredrik Barth puts it nicely: "...Muslims in Bali do not live in a world apart: they must also considerably mix and mingle with others who are uncommitted by, and relatively ignorant of, Islam and its premises; and so Islamic institutions must accommodate to this larger society."<sup>53</sup> Further, the former village head of Pegayaman said in an article that Islam teaches its adherents to respect all one's neighbors, not simply the Muslim ones; hence, he said, Muslims must coexist and live in mutual respect with all peoples.<sup>54</sup>

Unlike Islam, Balinese Hinduism is more locally and contextually based. A Balinese-Hindu's family and village are one's foci. One's ancestors that are believed to reincarnate into future generations reside in and receive offerings from one's family temple. Even people that do not currently live in their original village go back at least every 210 days for large bi-annual temple ceremonies. One's village temples are the main places of worship and, apart from setting out on voluntary pilgrimages to other sacred places in Bali such as *Pura Lempuyang*, a Balinese Hindu could live their whole life in their small village and never really give thought to any place or person outside.

Balinese Hinduism is such a unique mix of the major world religion of Hinduism and traditional Balinese practices that one will not find it duplicated anywhere else in the world because of the importance of its context. Hindus from India would see many Balinese-Hindu practices and rituals as foreign. Offerings, for example, are made from the plants that naturally

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<sup>53</sup> Fredrik Barth, *Balinese Worlds* (Chicago: Univ of Chicago Press, 1993), 177.

<sup>54</sup> Anton Muhajir, "Akulturasi Bali, Hindu dan Islam di Pegayaman," *Bale Bengong*, September 21, 2008, <http://www.balebengong.net/topik/budaya/2008/09/21/akulturasi-bali-hindu-dan-islam-di-pegayaman.html>.

grow in Bali's tropical climate. A rice god is incorporated in Balinese-Hindu belief because of its importance to the Balinese lifestyle. Traditional Balinese clothing, called *pakaian adat*, is the dress-code for temple ceremonies. These practices cannot be taken out of their Balinese context. Thus, Balinese-Hinduism is forced to retain its micro-level focus. Furthermore, Balinese-Hindus, from a historical standpoint, are not unaccustomed to living alongside those of different religions. Thus Balinese-Hinduism's worldview about non-Hindus is relatively undeveloped, nor is it that important to have one, for Hinduism does not actively seek converts.

With all this in mind about both religions, the basic stance of Amertasarian Muslims and Hindus toward the community as a whole makes more sense. Muslims give more to the community because they are accustomed to having a more global worldview and living among those that are not Muslim. Hindus keep to themselves because of the contextual nature of their religion and its historical roots.

#### A. FINAL THOUGHTS

Though some of my observations and conclusions may seem rather critical, the *banjar* of Amertasari is much further on the road of truly harmonious living between religious groups than most of the world, but in Bali especially. The overall atmosphere within the village is always friendly and polite, and any tensions are kept in private and not talked about much. In comparing Amertasari to the rest of the world and its inter-religious problems, this village is doing it right.

## VII. GLOSSARY OF TERMS

- ▶ ***banjar*** — a level of Balinese social and political organization; smaller than *desa*; comprised of *desa dinas* and *desa adat* (Amertasari is a *banjar* of the *desa*, Pegayaman.)
- ▶ ***desa*** — “village” in Bahasa Indonesian
- ▶ ***desa adat*** — customary or traditional village organization, rooted in Balinese Hinduism
- ▶ ***desa dinas*** — governmental or administrative village organization; secular; headed by the *klian dinas*
- ▶ ***kelompok tani*** — secular farming cooperation that is funded by the government
- ▶ ***KK (kepala keluarga)*** — family head; attends meetings as representative for family
- ▶ ***klian dinas*** — head of *desa dinas* (Pak Brohim in Amertasari)
- ▶ ***mushola*** — small meeting place for Muslims
- ▶ ***ngejot*** — Balinese custom of sharing food from offerings
- ▶ ***pengajian*** — “study” or “recitation”; what Muslims call their Sunday morning meeting
- ▶ ***subak*** — agricultural cooperation, usually focused on rice field irrigation; in Amertasari, the crop is coffee
- ▶ ***tajen*** — “cockfight”
- ▶ ***tempek*** — smaller units in *desa adat* of *banjar*; three in Amertasari, consisting of anywhere from 20 to 60 *KK*
- ▶ ***warung*** — small store that sells drinks, candy, noodles, etc.

## VIII. GLOSSARY OF RECURRING INFORMANTS

- ▶ Ibu Kadek (Kadek Tri Silawati) — (age 29) wife of Pak Putu and my Hindu host mom; her family is from outside Amertasari but she's been living here since she married Pak Putu in 2002
  
- ▶ Pak Brohim (I Nengah Ibrohim) — (specific age unclear but in his forties) *klian dinas* and main Muslim contact person; his compound neighbors Amertasari's *mushola* and after Sunday's *pengajian*, Muslims gather in his house for refreshments and snacks; people in Amertasari sometimes refer to him as "the boss"
  
- ▶ Pak Putu (Putu Suma Ardana) — (age 31) husband of Ibu Kadek and my Hindu host father; drove me to many of the events I attended; his family is from Amertasari; avid fan of cockfights

## IX. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

If I had more time, I would look at other multi-religious villages in Bali. (North Bali is full of them!) I would compare the different religious groups' relationships with one another and living atmospheres to Amertasari's. I would also ask more theological questions (with a good translator—this is very important) to the people of multi-religious societies, though it might be tough for the Balinese to answer them.

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